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FBI seeking former CIA agent as a Soviet mole

By Bill Gertz
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The FBI yesterday issued an arrest warrant for Edward Lee Howard, a 33-year-old former CIA officer in Moscow suspected of being a Soviet "mole."

Howard, who worked for the CIA from January 1981 until June 1983, was last posted in the Soviet capital, where he posed as a State Department budget analyst, according to sources.

He is charged, among other offenses, with conspiracy to deliver national defense secrets to a foreign government.

Howard is one of several suspected Soviet agents implicated as CIA moles by the KGB's No. 5 official, Vitaly Yurchenko. Mr. Yurchenko defected last August in Rome and is undergoing a debriefing by FBI and CIA officials.

Howard, a New Mexico native last seen near Albuquerque on Sept. 20, is on five years' probation for a conviction for assault with a deadly weapon.

The FBI searched the Howards' home and Jeep for code pads, microdots and other spy paraphernalia between last Friday and Tuesday, an agency spokesman said. Howard is believed to have fled for Texas last week without leaving word with his wife or friends.

Intelligence experts believe Howard might be a "give-away" or relatively unimportant Soviet agent and that it is too soon after Mr. Yurchenko's defection to determine if other American agents will be uncovered.

A senior CIA official in Washington confirmed that Howard had been a CIA operative, but that he was expelled from the agency in 1983. The official gave no reason for the ouster.

Former CIA chief Stansfield Turner, who was director from 1976-80, said in a telephone interview from Norway yesterday that there were no Soviet agents in the CIA, "not in the four years I was there."

But Admiral Turner asserted that it is "not impossible" that a Soviet mole could penetrate the agency.

N. Scot Miler, a former CIA counterintelligence official until the mid-1970s, said an operational officer such as Howard would have had

access to "significant" intelligence data about the CIA that would cause serious damage if passed on to the Russians.

While he had no direct knowledge of the case, Mr. Miler said in an interview that Howard, who has been identified as an "economic forecaster" could have given the Soviets secret financial data. Howard also would have known the names and identities of some U.S. and foreign agents working for the agency, he said.

Howard "was a friendly person in his professional dealings, but his private life was very private," said David Abbey, an economic analyst for the New Mexico state Department of Finance and Administration, where Howard worked.

He had close dealings with economists and other industry analysts at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, an Energy Department laboratory operated by the University of California that is involved in weapons research, said co-workers.

"He was very much a serious-minded person and always worried about the declining oil and gas situation," said Bob Swerdling, also a finance department analyst.

In rural Eldorado, southeast of Santa Fe, a neighbor said Howard did not participate in neighborhood activities, though his wife, Mary, did.